
AN EYE FOR AN EYE

*Reprisals made the guerrilla
war in southeastern Missouri
particularly vicious.*

By MARK J. CRAWFORD



MISSOURI WAS COVETED BY THE CONFEDERACY throughout the Civil War. The feeling was reciprocated among the inhabitants of the southeastern portion of the state. Known as "Secech Country," Missouri's pro-Confederate southeastern counties maintained a number of guerrilla groups. Loosely organized and even less disciplined, these raiders freely killed pro-Union citizens, plundered their property, and harassed Federal scouting patrols, often in the name of the Confederacy. In response to these depredations, Union authorities took severe measures, including the seizure or destruction of property owned by Southern sympathizers, often leading to retaliatory violence. Although only one major battle was fought in that region during the Civil War, the brutal guerrilla fighting made southeastern Missouri one of the most war-torn areas in the Union.

Chief among the Confederate leaders in the area was Timothy Reves, who a local Unionist branded a "murderous fiend" and a "blood-stained outlaw." A Baptist preacher from Doniphan in Ripley County, Reves joined the Southern cause in 1861 as a captain in the pro-Confederate Missouri State Guard, commanded by Maj. Gen. Sterling Price. The next year he raised the Independent Company of Missouri Scouts in his home county to scout enemy troop movements and defend the area against Union occupation.¹

Reves' company ranged the wooded hills, swamps, and bottom lands as far south as Batesville, Arkansas. On July 20, 1862, they attacked and routed two companies of the pro-Union Missouri State Militia (MSM) Cavalry commanded by Captain William T. Leeper at Greenville, Missouri. This raid, Reves' first military action in south-

eastern Missouri, enabled him to outfit his command with captured rifles and horses.²

Union opposition to Rebel bushwhackers like Reves consisted of small, inexperienced commands, occupying widely separated forts at Pilot Knob (Fort Davidson), Bloomfield, and Patterson. The tasks of scouting the counties, chasing guerrillas, and breaking up Confederate recruiting operations fell largely to the Third MSM Cavalry, commanded by Major James S. Wilson. Born in Maryland in 1834, Wilson had moved with his family to Missouri in 1856. Although his family was loyal to the Southern cause, Wilson remained loyal to the Union and enlisted as a private in the Third MSM Cavalry in 1861. He rapidly advanced through the ranks to first sergeant and captain. Wilson was promoted to major in 1863 and later commanded the third sub-district of St. Louis at Pilot Knob in 1864.³

The guerrilla bands that Wilson confronted rarely fought as units and would quickly scatter into the woods if confronted by superior numbers. "The countryside," wrote Captain Leeper, "is diversified by hills, valleys, swamps, marshes, generally heavy timber, underbrush, &c., interspersed with numerous creeks, rivers, and rivulets, offering all the advantages that could be desired by a guerrilla force, where they can operate, and in many places elude capture or almost defy pursuit."⁴

Considering the Confederate guerrillas in the area as little more than bandits, the Federals initiated a policy of executing suspected members. This policy only intensified local hatred for Federal authority. Unable to enlist their support, Federal troops began to regard the pro-Rebel citizenry as hostile and dealt with them harshly, knowing that many of them supported and concealed guerrillas. Brigadier General Clinton B. Fisk, who commanded Federal forces in the area in 1863, reported: "The fiends [guerrillas] murder none but radical Union men, while conservatives of undoubted loyalty are spared in property and person. The radicals are hunted from their homes, and their substance appropriated and destroyed. Our troops being chiefly from the radical portion of the community, it is with great difficulty that they are restrained from depredations upon the class favored by the bushwhackers."⁵

Marauding Union troops burned many homes and buildings that belonged to suspected Confederate supporters.⁶ Captain Leeper wrote, "Many men and women who are at home do us more damage than the regular soldier; they feed, harbor, and conceal the guerrillas."⁷ After scouting through Oregon and Ripley counties in November 1863,

Captain Robert McElroy of the Third MSM reported, "The women in that region are even more daring and treacherous, and, in fact, worse than the men, as we found in their possession a number of newly made Rebel Uniforms."⁸ General Fisk, obviously frustrated at the lack of success in containing Reves, commanded Leeper to "summon the wives of all the bushwhackers you can reach to come to Doniphan, and give them plainly to understand that either their husbands must come in and surrender themselves voluntarily and stop their villainous conduct, or their houses, stock, &c., will be given to the flames and the families all sent down the Mississippi River, to be imprisoned."⁹

Despite their best efforts to eradicate guerrilla activity, Federal soldiers found it impossible to protect the remaining Unionists in the area. As soon as patrols left their outposts, they entered enemy territory, where the troopers were often ambushed. Guerrilla bands continued to torment Unionist families, supplying themselves with stolen property. They also received food and horses from Confederate sympathizers. One resident remembered: "One morning several men came riding up and [took] the last of our horses. They had hardly gone when a big, grizzly-bearded man came to the kitchen and ordered Ma to get him some breakfast, and while he was eating, he made his boast that the buzzards would have [more] Yankees to feast on—That was 'Old Tim Reves'."¹⁰

Timothy Reves, who unlike some of the other guerrilla leaders was actually associated with the Confederate military throughout the war, continued his recruitment efforts in the area and spied on Federal troops. "Reves' men are now infesting the country lying between Doniphan, Greenville, and Martinsburg," a Federal officer reported in March 1863. "[They] are principally involved in enforcing the conscription law—[and] are all dressed in Federal cavalry coats."¹¹

In April, Reves' command ceased its guerrilla activity long enough to act as scouts for Brig. Gen. John S. Marmaduke's raid through southeastern Missouri.¹² From his camp on Cherokee Bay, an area of dense swamps and lowlands along the Black River, Captain Reves wrote Marmaduke on June 13, 1863, informing him that he had established a line of couriers from his camp to Pocahontas, Arkansas, and that: "There are several applications by Missourians to become members of my command. My company being full, I cannot take them without permission to raise another company." Reves also alerted General Sterling Price that "distilleries on the borders of Arkansas and Missouri are

consuming all the corn through this country—taking the forage from our horses, and leaving the soldiers' families in a state of suffering."¹³

After returning to his raiding activities, Reves became increasingly bothersome to Fisk, who ordered Leeper and 150 men to Doniphan to "give old Tim and his rascally gang such a hunt and extermination as they never yet had."¹⁴ Leeper boasted that he could take on Reves with only one hundred men: "Now would be a fine time to be after him. The leaves are gone, and they will have to find their holes."¹⁵ On October 31, 1863, Leeper and his men caught up with Reves in Arkansas and "gave chase, pressing him so closely that he dropped his blankets, coats, and hats, and drove him into the swamps, his native resort."¹⁶

Reves continued to elude Wilson and Leeper through December. On December 22, Reves struck back at his pursuers and captured an entire company of the Third MSM Cavalry, which was building stables in Centreville. "Company C is captured, excepting a few men," wrote Colonel R.G. Woodson, then commander at Pilot Knob. "No fight, a few scattering shots, and a few wounded. The facts that the enemy's means of information are so much superior to ours, and they came in from the west across the hills, and not by any road, with his advance dressed in Federal uniforms, may afford some excuse."¹⁷

Reves' command then immediately moved south, setting up camp on Forche Creek near the Arkansas border. Wilson, who had instructions to "follow him [Reves] to hell,"¹⁸ left Pilot Knob heading south with two hundred men at about 10 A.M. on December 23. Two days later, near Doniphan, the Federals captured some of Reves' pickets, who led them to his camp.

The Federals reached the Confederate camp and saw Reves' men preparing a holiday celebration. A historian described the festivities: "Four or five preachers were in attendance and a Christmas preaching was carried on for the cavalymen, their families, and most of the people living in the neighborhood. A Christmas meal was prepared by the Regimental messes."¹⁹ Local residents serving in other Confederate units also attended the festivities. "Old man Reves preached to them [captured] Yankees a whole afternoon," wrote a local resident. "He sure could get excited about preaching."²⁰

With their attention diverted by the festivities, Wilson took this opportunity to move in on the unsuspecting Confederates. According to Wilson's report, he arrived at Reves' camp as the celebration was in

progress: "[I] charged upon them with my whole force. The enemy fired, turned, and threw down their arms and fled, with the exception of 30 or 35, and they were riddled with bullets or pierced through with the saber almost instantly. The enemy lost in killed about 30; mortally wounded 3; slightly, 2; total killed and wounded, 35. Prisoners captured, 112; horses, besides those of Company C, 75; also all their arms, ammunition, and camp equipage. There was no loss on our side in killed or wounded."²¹

Confederate accounts indicate that the Federals attacked from all sides just as the group's arms were stacked and they were preparing to eat. Beside the Confederate casualties, more than sixty civilians, many of them women and children, were killed or wounded during the attack.²² Two of the women killed were Sarah Ponder, wife of A.J. Ponder, and Emaline Ponder, wife of Daniel MacKenzie Crockett Ponder. A.J. Ponder's five-year-old daughter, Louisa, also was shot to death.²³ According to several Confederate veterans, after attacking the camp, the Union soldiers ate the Christmas meal that had been prepared for Reves' men and then moved out with the prisoners and the captured horses. The Federals left all of the wounded behind. One guerrilla remembered that after the raid, "the ranks of the [Missouri Scouts] regiment were swelled by recruits anxious to avenge the deaths of their kin or friends."²⁴

While the losses among his band were severe, Reves had escaped, and the Federals were forced to continue their search. Leeper wrote: "Those who feed and conceal them [guerrillas] are as mean as they are, and I will kill them if the thing does not stop. If Union men are robbed, I will take their property to pay for it. If they kill a loyal man, I will kill 5 of them."²⁵ Despite the increasing ferocity of the Federals' efforts to locate the Rebel leader, Reves was able to elude Leeper throughout the winter.

In the spring of 1864, Reves was promoted and his command was designated Company A, Fifteenth Missouri Cavalry. On June 7, 1864, Brig. Gen. Joseph O. Shelby ordered Reves: "[G]et your command collected as soon as possible and join me. Increase your command as much as possible. Place every man in the service from sixteen to fifty."²⁶ Citizens fleeing Reves' aggressive conscription efforts confirmed Federal suspicions that the Confederates were planning a major campaign. In addition, Federal scouting reports estimated the strength of Reves' command at between two thousand and three thousand men.²⁷

Reves and his men soon reported to Colonel Thomas H. McCray, the commander of the Fifteenth Missouri at Jacksonport, Arkansas. On September 16, 1864, McCray's unit reported to Maj. Gen. James Fagan at Pocaahontas.²⁸ Fagan's command was to take part in Maj. Gen. Price's invasion of Missouri that was scheduled to begin in three days.

General Kirby Smith, commander of the Confederacy's Trans-Mississippi Department, had drawn up the plans for Price's invasion of Missouri. It was hoped that Price's advance would draw Union troops away from General Robert E. Lee's outnumbered forces in Virginia and attract recruits from among the pro-Confederate citizens of the state. The Order of American Knights (OAK), a secret pro-Confederate citizens' organization in Missouri, reportedly had large numbers of men ready to join Price's army.²⁹ The ultimate objective of the move was to occupy St. Louis, a critical Union transportation and communication center, and seize the Federal arsenal there.

Price assembled twelve thousand troops for his movement into Missouri. One witness who saw Price's men said that, "about 5,000...were the usual character of the Confederate cavalry. The remainder were deserters and conscripts."³⁰ Generals Marmaduke, Fagan and Shelby each led a division. "On the 19th of September," Price wrote, "I entered Missouri with nearly 12,000 men, of whom 8,000 were armed, and fourteen pieces of artillery."³¹ The Confederates marched in three columns on a wide front to confuse the enemy and to make foraging easier.

Brigadier General Thomas Ewing, Jr., commander of the Union forces in the St. Louis district, ordered Wilson to locate the advancing Rebels.³² About one hundred troopers from the Third MSM encountered forward parties of the advancing Confederate army outside Doniphan at 5 A.M. on September 19, 1864. The Federals exchanged shots with Confederates from Shelby's division and chased them back across the Arkansas border. After they had driven off the Confederates, the Third MSM returned to Doniphan and burned it to the ground.³³ The Missouri Unionists then rode toward Patterson, burning more homes along the way. Mrs. Washington Harris remembered they "burnt old Miss Gilasky's home and left her children sick on the ground," and Shelby's men passed "several houses burnt; women and children around the smoking ashes."³⁴

When Shelby's entire force reached Doniphan later in the afternoon, he was shocked to find the Union troops had burned the "helpless and

ill-fated town."³⁵ That night Shelby "dispatched 150 men commanded by Lt. Col. [Rector] Johnson to pursue the vandals. They came upon them early the next morning [September 20], attacked, scattered, and killed many of them."³⁶

As they advanced north, Price's men drove the Federal troops from the small garrisons at Patterson, Bloomfield, and Jackson toward Fort Davidson. On September 26, Fagan's division seized the town of Arcadia.³⁷ The only resistance to Fagan's advance on Arcadia was the determined skirmishing of Wilson's Third MSM

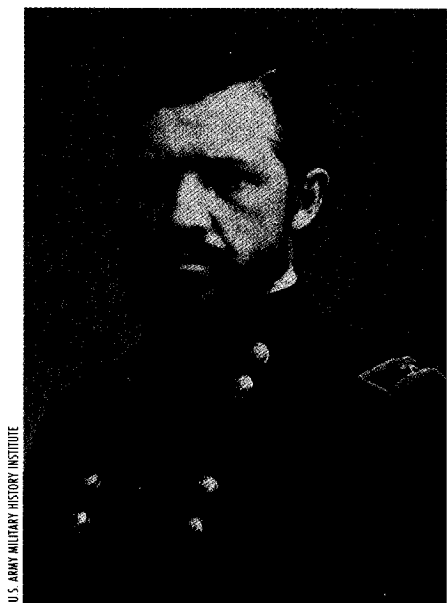
Cavalry and attached elements of the Forty-seventh Missouri and Fourteenth Iowa Infantry regiments, a force of almost four hundred men. Late in the afternoon Wilson was wounded in the forehead during a cavalry charge and fell from his horse, blood streaming down his face. He remounted and directed his men in a steady retreat until they reached Fort Davidson at noon the next day.³⁸ After his arrival at Fort Davidson, Wilson was ordered to establish a skirmish line along the northern flank of Pilot Mountain and prepare for Price's impending assault.

With the Federals confined in the fort, Price ordered his artillery to the top of nearby Shepherd Mountain. The Confederates struggled for two hours up the boulder-strewn slopes and over rock ledges.³⁹ Despite the commanding artillery position, Price decided to utilize his numerical superiority to launch a full frontal assault on Fort Davidson following an artillery bombardment.

Approximately forty-seven hundred Confederate troops were deployed along Shepherd and Pilot mountains' ridges. McCray's brigade, including Reves' Fifteenth Missouri Cavalry, formed the extreme right of the Confederate line, just below the crest of Pilot mountain and opposite Wilson's skirmish line. With the start of the artillery barrage at two o'clock in the afternoon, the Confederates surged



Brigadier General Joseph O. Shelby



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Brigadier General Thomas Ewing, Jr.

forward over the mountain's crests, but the boulders, ravines, and fallen timber on the steep slopes hampered their advance.

Wilson's men looked up from their positions and saw McCray's brigade swarming down the hillside. Captain Franz Dinger of the Forty-seventh Missouri Infantry wrote that Wilson "had 3 revolvers which he kept firing all the time at the advancing enemy."⁴⁰ Outnumbered ten-to-one, Union soldiers finally broke and scattered. Wilson, Dinger, and a few other men made a final stand behind an old steam mill at the foot of the

mountain, but McCray's men soon captured them.

Because of their irregular descent, the Confederate brigades did not attack the fort in unison, enabling the smaller Federal force to concentrate their fire on the nearest enemy. McCray's brigade was quickly pinned down in a dry stream bed on the open plain in front of the fort where they remained for the rest of the fight. Other units advanced through a "galling and destructive fire of artillery and musketry"⁴¹ and came within twenty yards of Fort Davidson's walls, only to be cut down by hand grenades and concentrated rifle fire. The Confederates finally turned and fled.

Wilson and his men were being escorted to the rear of Price's army when "the repulsed and demoralized troops of Fagan's division swept down the valley in a frantic stampede that swept up the men guarding the Federal prisoners." Although in full retreat, a Confederate colonel was composed enough to recognize Major Wilson and two privates as a "strange spectacle stemming their way in the contrary direction through the fleeing Rebel host, and at once took charge of them and turned them into the prison corral at Arcadia."⁴²

The Federal prisoners marched at the rear of Price's army through Richwood and St. Clair and on Sunday, October 2, stopped about ten miles west of Union, Missouri.⁴³ Captain Dinger recalled: "On the



morning of October 3, we were called into line by a man who was called the Inspector General....[He] rode up and down the line, asking where we were captured and our names."⁴⁴ Witnesses later stated that each prisoner who gave his regiment as the Third Missouri State Militia Cavalry was ordered to step two paces to the front.⁴⁵ Major Wilson and five of his men—William W. Gourley, William C. Grotts, William Scaggs, John W. Shew, and John Holabaugh—were the first to step forward. Members of the Third farther down the line, fearful that they were going to be shot, gave different regiments. A sixth unidentified soldier gave his command as the Third MSM, possibly thinking the first squad for parole was being selected, and unwittingly stepped forward to his doom.⁴⁶

The inspector general told the officer to "put a double guard over that damned major." Another guard was posted on the road to watch

for Colonel Reves' command and ordered to "hand these prisoners over to it" when he arrived. Dinger wrote: "I then went to Major Wilson who was just in the rear of me and he gave me his pocket-book, saying 'Capt., I have fallen into bad hands and I do not think I will see you again.' I then shook hands with him and went back to my place. Soon after I was paroled but Maj. Wilson and [his] men were taken away by a guard."⁴⁷



THE KANSAS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, TOPEKA, KANSAS

Major General Sterling Price

The civilian killings during Wilson's Christmas attack and the wanton destruction of Doniphan had fueled the Confederates' desire for revenge against the major and the Third MSM. Guarded by a column of Reves' men, the prisoners from the Third were marched through an abandoned field and into the woods. Colonel T.J. Oliphant remembered:

A body of men, who had charge of them, with Col. Reves at the head, turned from the main road....The march of the prisoners was exceeding quiet and slow. They passed suddenly into the bed of a creek and on to the other side....While thus stopped, Col. Reves addressed Maj. Wilson and told him that he had been ordered by Gen. Price to take them out and shoot them, when Maj. Wilson, looking straight into the eye of Col. Reves, said, "You do not mean to say that you are going to shoot us without a trial?" To which Reves replied, "You have been tried, and such are my orders."

When they were placed in position to be shot, [a sixteen year old] boy began to cry and take on at a terrible rate....My sympathy was so aroused that I rode around to where the colonel was sitting of his horse, and said "Colonel, it looks hard to shoot the boy." To which he replied, "Yes; but he is in bad company, and such are my orders."...Before the order to fire was given, Maj. Wilson and the men were asked "if they had anything to say" and none but the boy said anything, and he nothing more than I have stated. Maj. Wilson took his hat off and laid it on the ground in front of him, and he and the five others stood facing the detail, apparently without tremor, but the boy continued his cry. When the fire was ordered, Maj. Wilson was shot dead with many bullets. All were shot to the ground except the boy, who stood untouched, and a peremptory order was given to shoot again, when he fell dead. The men were stripped of their clothing, such as could be used as trophies, and especially Maj. Wilson, and they were left where they fell....⁴⁸

The killing of Major Wilson and his men was the culmination of a long

series of vicious encounters between Reves and Wilson. "I must state for Colonel Reves," wrote the Missouri Confederate partisan, Brig. Gen. M. Jeff Thompson, "that he was as good a man and soldier as any in the command, and his shooting of that party, was entirely justifiable....I knew Reves' men, nearly every one of them, and the provocation was bitter, for I had seen the blackened ruins and lonely graves of Ripley County with my own eyes."⁴⁹

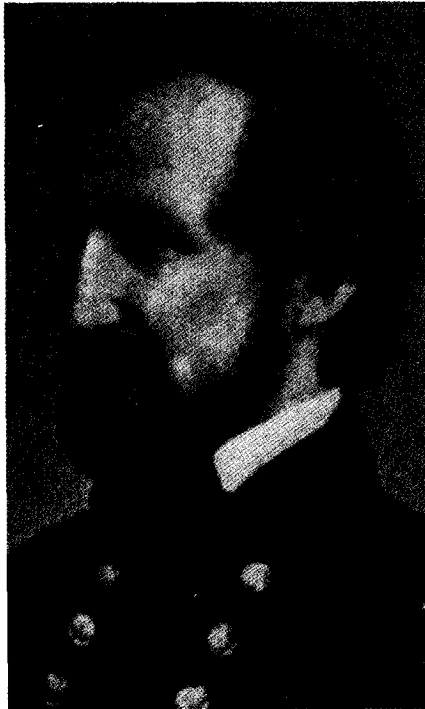
Word first reached St. Louis about the murder of Major Wilson from Federal prisoners who had been paroled by Price. General William S. Rosecrans immediately issued the following orders: "[A] major and six enlisted men of the rebel army...to be kept in solitary confinement until the fate of Major Wilson and his men is known. These men will receive the same treatment Major Wilson and his men received."⁵⁰

Rosecrans also ordered a search to be conducted for Wilson and the other prisoners. On October 23, a child searching for persimmons in the woods found seven bodies along St. Johns Creek. "We went out to where the bodies were with lanterns," wrote James M. Kitchen, a local resident. "One of the bodies we saw had on officer's clothes. The

straps were those of a Major, yellow with a leaf." Wilson had been shot twice through the left breast and once in the head. Three of the other bodies "had no clothes on save their shirts and drawers...and were so eaten by hogs that we could not distinguish a feature."⁵¹ The remains were wrapped and brought to St. Louis in a wagon for burial.

Rosecrans, infuriated by the murders, wasted little time in carrying out his retaliatory threat. On October 28 he issued special order number 279:

It appearing from the most conclusive evidence that Maj. James Wilson, Third Cavalry Missouri State Militia, and six men of his command...were turned over...to the guerrilla Tim. Reves,



Major General William S. Rosecrans

at a place near the town of Union, in Franklin County, Mo., and that [were] subsequently brutally murdered by this blood-stained outlaw; therefore...the following six of the enlisted men of the rebel army—James W. Gates, Company H, Third Missouri Cavalry, C.S. Army; John N. Ferguson, Company A, Crabtree's Cavalry, C.S. Army; Harvey H. Blackburn, Company A, Coleman's Cavalry, C.S. Army; John Nichols, Company G, Second Missouri Cavalry, C.S. Army; Charles W. Minneken, Company A, Crabtree's (Arkansas) Cavalry, C.S. Army; Asa V. Ladd, Company A, Burbridge's (Missouri) Cavalry, C.S. Army—will be shot to death with musketry within the limits of the city of St. Louis, Mo., on Saturday, the 29th day of October, 1864, between the hours of 2 and 4 p.m.⁵²

The six Confederates, members of Price's army, had arrived at Gratiot Street Prison in St. Louis after October 20, 1864. According to the Ladd family history: "Only those prisoners who refused to take the Oath of Allegiance...were marched into a room where they were ordered to draw lots. A container which held marbles, of which there were six black ones, was held above eye level so the men could not see the color they were drawing....Those drawing a black one were to be executed."⁵³

No Rebel majors were imprisoned in St. Louis at the time Rosecrans issued his order, so the first major captured after that date would be shot in retaliation for Wilson's death. Private Ferguson's case was reviewed, and the following morning Private George F. Bunch, Company B, Third Missouri Cavalry, was substituted for Ferguson on the execution list, "It appearing from this man's examination that he never bore arms and was only employed as a teamster."⁵⁴

On the morning of October 29, Asa Ladd, a father of seven children, wrote to his wife, Amy, who was at their farm in nearby Stoddard County:

Dear Wife and Children,

I take my pen up with a trembling hand to inform you that I have to be shot between the hours of two and 4 o'clock this evening. I have but four hours to remain in this unfriendly world. There is six of us sentenced to die in the room of six Union soldiers that was shot by Reves' men.

My dear wife, don't grieve after me. I am going to rest. I want you to meet me in Heaven. I want you to teach the children piety, so that they may meet me at the right hand of God. Amy, when I left home, I did not think that I would be shot under sentence, but I am in the hands of men who have the power to execute the sentence, therefore I shall submit myself into the hands of God Almighty....⁵⁵

The men were taken by covered wagon at about 2 P.M. to Fort No. 4, near Lafayette Park. Thousands of spectators, mostly soldiers, gathered to

watch. According to the *St. Louis Democrat*:

On the west side of the fort six posts had been set in the ground, each with a seat attached, and each tied with a strip of white cotton cloth, afterward used in bandaging the eyes of the prisoners. Fifty-four men were selected as the executioners, forty-four of them belonging to the 10th Kansas and ten to the 41st Missouri. Thirty-six of these composed the front firing party, eighteen being reserved in case they should not do the work effectually.

About three o'clock the prisoners arrived on the ground, and sat down, attached to the posts. They all appeared to be more or less affected, but, considering the circumstances, remained remarkably firm. Father Ward and Rev. Mr. McKim spoke to the men in their last moments, exhorting them to put their trust in God. The row of posts ranged north and south, and at the first on the north was Asa V. Ladd, on his left was [John] Nichols, next Harvey H. Blackburn, George [F.] Bunch, Charles W. Minneken and James W. Gates.

Ladd and Blackburn sat with perfect calmness, with their eyes fixed on the ground, and did not speak. Nichols shed tears, which he wiped away with a red pocket handkerchief, and continued to weep until his eyes were bandaged. Nichols gave no sign of emotion at first, but sat with seeming indifference, scraping the ground with his heel. He asked one of the surgeons if there was any hope of a postponement, and being assured that there was none, he looked more serious, and frequently [expounded] "Lord, have mercy on my poor soul!" Again he said: "O, to think of the news that will go to father and mother!"

After the reading of the sentence by Col. Heinrichs, Minniken [*sic*] expressed a desire to say a few words. He said: "Soldiers, and all of you who hear me, take warning from me. I have been a Confederate soldier four years, and have served my country faithfully. I am now to be shot for what other men have done, that I had no hand in, and know nothing about. I never was a guerrilla, and I am sorry to be shot for what I had nothing to do with, and what I am not guilty of. When I took a prisoner I always treated him kindly, and never harmed a man after he surrendered. I hope God will take me to his bosom when I am dead. O, Lord, be with me!..."

At the word, the thirty-six soldiers fired simultaneously, the discharge sounding like a single explosion. The aim of every man was true. One or two of the victims groaned, and Blackburn cried out: "Oh, kill me quick!" In five minutes they were all dead, their heads falling to one side, and their bodies swinging around to the sides of the posts, and being kept from falling by the pinions on their arms. Five of them were shot through the heart, and the sixth received three balls in his breast, dying almost instantly.⁵⁶

While the drama was being played out in St. Louis, General Price and his men continued on after their failed attack on Fort Davidson. The morning after the attack, Price had sent Marmaduke and Shelby in

pursuit of the Federals, who had escaped from the fort. Despite some rear-guard actions, the Union troops marched sixty-six miles and reached safety. The pursuing Confederates withdrew and rejoined Price's army.

"After caring for our wounded and burying our dead," wrote one of Price's men, "we resumed our march, following the Missouri River. Constantly for twenty days succeeding some part of our command was engaged with the enemy...."⁵⁷ The army moved west along the southern bank of the Missouri River, tearing up railroad tracks, looting, and burning bridges.

Price was caught in a costly rear-guard action at the Battle of Mine Creek on October 25. Spirited cavalry charges routed Marmaduke's forces and captured a number of prisoners, including Marmaduke, Brig. Gen. William Cabell, and Major Enoch O. Wolf. The defeat demoralized the Confederates, and many soldiers deserted. The Confederates abandoned and burned many of their supply wagons and other property to expedite their march.⁵⁸ Federal reports indicated: "Price is now entering a mountainous country very destitute of supplies, and his men are actually falling dead of starvation in his rear. He has destroyed most of his train and is very destitute, but all of his men being mounted he continues to make rapid progress. His troops are so destitute of provisions the elm trees for miles had been stripped to furnish food for the starving multitude."⁵⁹

His invasion a failure, Price began to disassemble his army on November 2, and Reves and his command left on November 3 for Jacksonport, Arkansas. Price and his remaining troops then took a torturous detour around the Federal stronghold at Fort Smith and entered Indian Territory (Oklahoma) on November 5. The men suffered terribly during the march, finally arriving at Laynesport, Arkansas, on December 2. The raid was over.⁶⁰

Meanwhile, Federal authorities in St. Louis had yet to execute a Confederate major in retaliation for the death of Major Wilson. During the Battle of Mine Creek in Kansas, seven Confederate majors had been captured, two of whom were field officers. The enemy prisoners were marched more than one hundred miles to Warrensburg, Missouri, where they were loaded into stock cars and shipped to Gratiot Street Prison.⁶¹ When it was decided that one of the two field majors would be executed, the prison guards drew straws,⁶² and on the morning of Tuesday, November 8, 1864, Major Enoch Wolf was summoned, as he

recalled, from the "prison where the Confederate officers were confined and taken to an anvil and a 12-pound ball and chain riveted to my ankle, and then my sentence read me as follows: 'In retaliation for Major Wilson, Maj. Enoch O. Wolf, of Lieut. Col. B. Ford's battalion, Colonel T.R. Freeman's brigade, General Marmaduke's division, General Price's Army, shall be shot to death with musketry on Friday next [November 11] between the hours of 9 and 11 o'clock.'" ⁶³

Wolf was confined to his cell under a strong guard. Later that day he wrote to General Rosecrans:

Now General, I have one favor to ask and it is with you to say whether it is fair or not. The favor is this: If this inhuman and unsoldier-like deed was committed will you please ask General Price to deliver the perpetrator of this crime, and if he turned Major Wilson over to this notorious bushwhacking Tim. Reves to be executed, he certainly will make satisfaction by delivering up to the authorities the man who committed this inhuman crime. I think these steps should be taken before you go further. I ask it as a soldier, as I asked it as a gentleman. I asked as an officer. I asked as a member of the Masonic fraternity. Excuse my bad writing. ⁶⁴

Wolf also wrote a letter to his wife, Eviza, and told her "that with the help of my Masonic friends she could raise our children all right." He had meetings and conversations with A.C. Osborn, a Baptist preacher who baptized Wolf "in one of the large bathtubs in the bathroom at McDowell's College [Gratiot Street Prison]." Wolf asked Osborn to read his letter to his wife to assure Federal authorities it was not of a contraband nature. "When he came to the part where I mentioned my Masonic friends," Wolf later recalled, "he stopped reading and asked if I were a Mason. I made it plain to him that I was and he asked why I had not let it be known before. I told him I didn't know it would make any difference." ⁶⁵ Osborn dropped the letter and rushed out of the prison to confer with other Masons in the city.

On November 10, the day before Major Wolf's execution, President Abraham Lincoln received three telegrams from prominent St. Louis Masons pleading clemency in the case of Wolf. Later that day Lincoln sent the following telegram to General Rosecrans: "Suspend execution of Major Wolf until further order, & meanwhile, report to me on the case." ⁶⁶ The next day, November 11, Rosecrans wrote to Lincoln about Wolf's case and the coldblooded assassination or official murder by Price's command of Wilson and six others. ⁶⁷ After reading

Rosecrans' report, Lincoln sent him a telegram dated November 19, which read, "This letter places the case again within your control, with the remark only that I wish you to do nothing merely for revenge, but that what you may do, shall be solely done with reference to the security of the future."⁶⁸

Major Wolf's life would be spared, and he was later transferred to Johnson's Island Prison on Lake Erie, where he spent the rest of the war. Meanwhile, the guerrilla leader whose actions initiated the Union reprisals arrived in Jacksonport, Arkansas, on November 10, 1864, and he and his men reportedly returned to their activities along the Missouri-Arkansas border. An attack by a Federal patrol on January 10, 1865 "[C]ame near to capturing Reves...one captain that was with him [was] killed; captured his quartermaster. Reves escaped, half dressed, by getting into the swamp and swimming Black River." The streams were high and overflowing, and a Federal officer noted "the whole face of the country for eight miles...[was covered] with water from two to three feet deep, through which the command had to march and break their way through ice from one and a half to two inches thick."⁶⁹

A week later Reves was attacked on Cherokee Bay and driven into the swamps. The colonel and his demoralized men spent the remaining months of the war on the run from Federal patrols anxious to avenge the death of Major Wilson. Reves' command was with General Meriwether J. Thompson when he and more than seven thousand men surrendered to Union forces in northern Arkansas in May 1865. "The only person that presented himself that we declined to parole was Col. Tim. Reves, Fifteenth Missouri Cavalry," wrote Lt. Col. C.W. Davis. "He is the officer that ordered the shooting of Major Wilson and six of his men in the fall of 1864, after they had surrendered."⁷⁰

Perhaps recognizing that everyone was guilty of acts outside the normal rules of war, the Federal government took no further action against Reves. After the war, the former guerrilla leader returned to Ripley county and lived a quiet life as a Baptist minister. He died at the age of sixty-three on March 13, 1885. His headstone reads:

Separation is our lot
Meeting is our gain. ☪

¹ *Missouri Historical Review* 80, no. 2, 1986, 176-195.

² United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (hereinafter referred to as *OR*), ser. 1, vol. 13, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), 166-171.

³ Compiled Military Service Record for Major James S. Wilson, Military Records Division, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.

⁴ *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 48, pt. 1, 1054.

⁵ *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 1, 416-417.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 302.

⁷ *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 34, pt. 1, 213.

⁸ *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 22, pt. 1, 744.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 678.

¹⁰ *Ironton Iron County Register*, October 2, 1913.

¹¹ *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 22, pt. 2, 174.

¹² *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 22, pt. 1, 286, 300-301.

¹³ *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 22, pt. 2, 866-867.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 678.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 676.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 743.

¹⁷ *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 34, pt. 2, 5-6.

¹⁸ *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 22, pt. 2, 750.

¹⁹ John Hume, *The Ripley County Massacre* (March 1907), on file at the Doniphan Public Library, Doniphan, Missouri. Possibly part of the John Hume Collection, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri.

²⁰ Mrs. Washington Harris, interviews, 1881 and 1889, Dr. John Hume Collection, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri. Partial typescripts courtesy of Mr. Jerry Ponder, Fairdealing, Missouri.

²¹ *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 22, pt. 1, 784.

²² Hume, *The Ripley County Massacre*; Harris, interviews, 1881 and 1889.

²³ Ponder Family Records, courtesy of Mr. Jerry Ponder, Fairdealing, Missouri.

²⁴ Donald J. Stanton, Goodwin F. Berquist, and Paul C. Bowers, eds., *The Civil War Reminiscences of General M. Jeff Thompson* (Dayton: Morningside Press, 1988), 294.

²⁵ *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 34, pt. 4, 652-653.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 652-653.

²⁷ *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 2, 787.

²⁸ *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 22, pt. 2, 643.

²⁹ *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 1, 307, 424.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 722.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 627.

³² *Ibid.*, 454-455.

³³ Letter, William Nevin to Cyrus Peterson, Ewing Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³⁴ OR, ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 1, 644.

³⁵ Ibid., 652.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 629.

³⁸ B.A. Suderow, *Thunder in Arcadia Valley: Price's Defeat, September 27, 1864* (Cape Girardeau: Southeastern Missouri State University, 1986), 81-83.

³⁹ "Account of Birdie Hale Cole," *Confederate Veteran* 22, 1914, 417.

⁴⁰ "Statement of Capt. Franz Dinger," James Wilson Papers, Collection 1994, Joint Collection, Western Historical Manuscripts Collection, Columbia, Missouri.

⁴¹ Suderow, *Thunder in Arcadia Valley*, 64-65, 110.

⁴² Cyrus A. Peterson, *Narrative of the Capture and Murder of Major James Wilson* (St. Louis: A.R. Fleming Printing Company, 1906), 10-11.

⁴³ "Statement of Capt. Franz Dinger."

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Peterson, *Narrative of the Capture and Murder of Major James Wilson*, 12-13.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 12-13.

⁴⁷ "Statement of Capt. Franz Dinger."

⁴⁸ Charles Edward Nash, *Biographical Sketches of Gen. Pat Cleburne and Gen. T.C. Hindman* (Dayton: Morningside Bookshop, 1977), 170-173.

⁴⁹ Hume, *The Ripley County Massacre*.

⁵⁰ OR, ser. 2, vol. 7, 1061.

⁵¹ "Statements of Michael Swickey and James Madison Kitchen," in the James Wilson Papers, Collection 1994, Joint Collection, Western Historical Manuscripts, Columbia, Missouri.

⁵² OR, ser. 2, vol. 7, 1061.

⁵³ Ladd Family History, courtesy of Mrs. Laverne Papworth, Troy, Michigan, and Mrs. Shirley Ladd, Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

⁵⁴ OR, ser. 2, vol. 7, 1062.

⁵⁵ Letter, Asa Ladd to Amy Ladd, October 29, 1864, Asa V. Ladd Papers, University of Missouri Western Historical Manuscripts Collection, Columbia, Missouri.

⁵⁶ *St. Louis Democrat*, October 31, 1864.

⁵⁷ *Confederate Veteran* 13, 1905, 226.

⁵⁸ OR, ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 1, 313-314.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 513, 517.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 647-648.

⁶¹ Francis Shiras, "Major Wolf and Abraham Lincoln: An Episode of the Civil War," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 2, no. 1-4 (March-December 1943), 353-358.

⁶² *Confederate Veteran* 18, no. 8, 1910, 380-381.

⁶³ OR, ser. 2, vol. 7, 1111.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Shiras, "Major Wolf and Abraham Lincoln," 353-358.

⁶⁶ Abraham Lincoln, *Collected Works*, vol. 8, Roy P. Basler, ed. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953-55), 102.

⁶⁷ OR, ser. 2, vol. 7, 1118.

⁶⁸ *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 8, 116.

⁶⁹ OR, ser. 1, vol. 48, pt. 1, 19-20, 475.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 19-20, 237.